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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 00116/90
2 February 1990

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Main Soviet Objectives for the Moscow Ministerial

- The CPSU Central Committee plenum on 5-6 February will be contentious and probably result in a further radicalization of reform and a bolstering of Gorbachev's position in the party. Even if in the unlikely event that it resulted in a standoff on reform, the plenum probably will not have a direct effect on the Soviet negotiating position at the ministerial.
- Because of the growing sense of crisis in the country as well as the unraveling of Moscow's East European empire, the Soviets have an even greater desire for arms control agreements and a successful summit in Washington in June.
- To clear the last hurdles on the way to a START treaty, the Soviets are likely to compromise on ALCMs and be willing in the end to defer SLCMs and the relationship of the ABM treaty to a START agreement to future talks.
- Moscow will be eager for a major breakthrough on CFE, seeing that treaty and a CSCE summit in 1990 as the best means for managing the rapid pace of change in Central Europe. While welcoming President Bush's lower manpower ceiling, the Soviets probably will want the ceiling to cover the entire CFE forward region.
- The Soviets will elicit US views on the unification of Germany and are likely to propose a joint US-Soviet statement that welcomes eventual unification but reiterates Four Power rights to have a say in how and when it is done.

This Executive Brief reflects the view of the Intelligence Community expressed at a teleconference held on 30 January 1990. It was drafted by the National Intelligence Officer for the USSR and coordinated within the Community.

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Since Malta, the Soviet domestic crisis has deepened and the de-Communization of Eastern Europe accelerated. The Gorbachev leadership now has even more reason to seek agreements with Washington that will reduce the defense burden on the Soviet economy and allow for managed, rather than destabilizing, change in the European security order. Further concrete progress in the USSR's relationship with the United States would also give Gorbachev a welcome boost at a time when his domestic policies are coming under increasingly sharp criticism from both the left and the right.

The Plenum's Impact

With the turmoil in the country intensifying, Gorbachev is under pressure to show he can deal with the crisis. Continued temporizing in the face of the fast-moving domestic scene would erode his authority. His plan to use the plenum to make new radical moves evidently encountered opposition in the Politburo and led to the postponement until 5-6 February.

Even so, we believe that Gorbachev intends to propose changes in the party that would eventually lead to:

- Direct election to party posts and abolition of the *nomeklatura* system, which would facilitate the ouster of many entrenched hardliners at lower levels.
- A major loosening of "democratic centralism" permitting criticism of party decisions after they are approved and perhaps an indication of willingness to drop the constitutional guarantee of the party's leading role.
- Federalization of the party as a means of convincing the non-Russian parties not to break away from the CPSU.

Movement in this direction, as well as the continuing crises in the Baltic and the Caucasus, is certain to produce heated debate and increased tensions at the plenum. Although the outcome remains uncertain, the weight of evidence leads us to believe that

Gorbachev will probably make major progress on his program, and he might even oust party traditionalists, such as Ligachev and Zaykov, and move up the timetable for the party congress now set for October.

- Reporting indicates that such changes in the leadership may be in the offing, although Gorbachev's opponents will attempt to mount a counterattack.
- The unusual removal of six regional party chiefs in the last two weeks suggests that Gorbachev's efforts to activate the party's grass roots is finally paying dividends.

Although less likely, the outcome could be more balanced, with advances on reform combined with a plenum statement on the need for more order and discipline in society to mollify traditionalists. This could take the form of a call for the Supreme Soviet to pass a restrictive press law and limit criticism of the armed forces. Although such steps would limit Gorbachev's gains, they would not likely be enough to derail his push for more radical policies.

We judge the potential for a major setback to Gorbachev at the plenum--continued stalemate on the major issues--to be low. His hardline critics have not shown the ability to do anything beyond complaining about his policies. And rumors about his abandoning his party post seem unfounded. He still acts and speaks as if he believes that the party is essential to the success of *perestroika*. If he manages to oust prominent traditionalists in the next few months, Gorbachev may expand the powers of the presidency and attempt to govern the country solely from that post; but he probably would not do this until after the October party congress.

As long as Gorbachev avoids a major setback at the plenum, which we believe he will, the results are not likely to have much direct impact on his negotiating posture. We know of no significant opposition within the leadership to Gorbachev's positions on the major arms control agreements he hopes to conclude with the United States at the June summit and with the West as a whole by the end of 1990.

An Arms Control Ministerial

Moscow wants to nail down START and CFE agreements this year to provide a stable framework for the rapidly changing East-West security relationship and to get Western concessions for a number of Soviet force reductions and withdrawals that the Kremlin perceives are either necessary or inevitable. Accordingly, arms control will be the Soviets' main focus at the ministerial--rivalled only by the interrelated issue of German unification.

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, in our view, are ready to deal on the START issues the US has singled out for resolution at the ministerial--ALCMs, non-deployed missiles, and telemetry encryption. Of these, the Soviets regard ALCMs as the most important.

- They see no insurmountable obstacles on ALCMs.
- They probably can accept a trade-off or even propose, as some Soviets have suggested, compromise solutions on range limits and bomber counting rules.

Moscow considers the issues of SLCMs and the linkage of the ABM treaty to a START agreement more difficult to resolve.

- If they cannot get US acceptance of verifiable binding limits on SLCMs in talks parallel with START, they may propose an agreement to address SLCMs in START II or in naval arms control talks. Less likely, they might offer to loosen Soviet requirements for intrusive verification in return for US acceptance of binding limits.
- They will push again for language specifying that a violation or abrogation of the ABM treaty is grounds for withdrawal from START and for US acceptance of the narrow interpretation of the ABM treaty. They probably will not, however, let these issues get in the way of nailing down a START agreement.

Beyond these matters, Shevardnadze and Gorbachev will be eager to get a commitment from the Bush administration to move quickly to START II negotiations once START I is signed.

CFE and the German Question

The primary goal of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze here will be to obtain US understanding of the need to move rapidly to preserve both stability and a continuing role for the superpowers in Central Europe.

- They want a CFE treaty before the USSR is compelled by events in Eastern Europe to remove its forces unilaterally.
- They will push hard for a US commitment to a CSCE summit this year that encompasses the signing of a CFE agreement and discussion of the new European order.

Rapid movement toward a unified Germany is a driving factor behind the Kremlin's current stance both on CFE and the need for an early CSCE summit. Gorbachev and his allies now recognize that unification is inevitable, requiring a bolder strategy to give them some influence on the process.

The Soviets are actively considering various routes to a unified Germany. They are likely to raise specific ideas at the ministerial, possibly using East German Premier Modrow's plan--presumably influenced by Gorbachev during their talks earlier this week--as a point of departure.

- They probably will propose a joint US-Soviet statement that welcomes eventual unification but emphasizes Four Power rights to have a say in how it is done.
- But their thinking is in flux, and we do not know whether they will, in the end, insist that a unified Germany cannot be part of NATO.

On the specifics of a CFE treaty, the Soviets, while applauding President Bush's new

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ceiling of 195,000 for US and Soviet forces in the Central zone, will seek clarification and may propose that the ceiling encompass the entire CFE forward area. Even if they cannot achieve that, there is a good chance they will accept the lower ceiling when the US side formally presents it in Vienna.

- They are ready, moreover, to concede that only US and Soviet stationed forces need be limited in a CFE treaty.
- The pressure to conclude a treaty once the manpower issue is resolved might spur Soviet concessions on the other issues blocking signature—especially aircraft.

Other Arms Control Matters

Beyond START and CFE, the Soviets are likely to press at the ministerial for closure on nuclear testing and chemical weapons agreements. They will ask for US reaffirmation of a commitment to step-by-step negotiations of nuclear testing limits. They have also indicated that they intend to table a repackaging of their arms control and confidence building measures for the Asia-Pacific region.

Regional Issues

Shevardnadze will chide us on Panama but not dwell on it. He will encourage us to accept the results of the likely Sandinista victory in this month's election in Nicaragua and begin a direct dialogue with the Sandinistas.

The Foreign Minister will want to explore US views on the prospects for the Baker Plan on the Arab-Israeli peace process. He will reiterate his call for US acceptance of a more direct PLO role in talks with Israel and a place for Moscow at the table. At the same time, he will encourage us also to pursue a separate track of a preparatory conference of UN Security Council members.

Shevardnadze probably will be evasive on the specific conditions for Soviet reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

- The recent contretemps over settlement of Soviet Jews on the West Bank gives him further reason for caution.
- Whether he spells it out, however, we believe that the Soviets are now ready to resume relations once Israel begins talks with a Palestinian delegation accepted by the PLO and agrees to a Soviet role in the process.

On Iran-Iraq, Moscow will argue that the talks between Tehran and Baghdad it proposes to host will support, not circumvent, the UN process.

On Afghanistan, Shevardnadze is likely to be in a listening mode. Events on the ground in Afghanistan put Moscow under no pressure to fall off its key negotiating positions.

- The Soviets are prepared to be flexible on the process of reaching a political settlement.
- But they are not ready, in our view, to sign on to a first-stage *shura* inside Afghanistan that excludes the PDPA.
- They will accept Najibullah's demise in the free play of a settlement process but not as a prearranged requirement.